

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN: A PRELIMINARY STUDY USING A MODIFIED SOCIAL EXPERIMENT APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a pervasive issue affecting the social and emotional well-being of children worldwide, with primary school students particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage. Although many studies have been done to gather data on bullying among primary school children, conventional approaches such as qualitative interviews are unable to capture the number of bullying incidences among this group of respondents. Using the conventional approach also is often challenging when students have poor comprehension skills. Therefore, the objective of this preliminary study was to investigate the frequency of bullying incidents among primary school children using a novel data collection approach. Specifically, this study intends to identify common forms of bullying and elucidate the bullying narrative experienced by the respondents using a modified social experiment approach. Data were collected from 111 students aged 10 to 12 at a primary school in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia. The survey instrument was adapted from the assessment instruments of the Malaysian Ministry of Education's Handbook for Managing Bullying in Schools. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings indicate a high prevalence of four types of bullying: physical bullying, verbal bullying, extortion, and ostracism. Victim-respondents reported experiencing bullying due to their differences in social class, religion, and physical appearance. Several respondents also indicated the threats issued by the bullies should they fail to comply with their instructions. This study highlights the urgent need for tailored interventions and preventive strategies within school systems to address bullying effectively. Future research directions and recommendations for educators and policymakers are discussed to promote safer and more inclusive primary school environments.

Keywords: School Bullying, Primary Students, Social Experiment, Extortion, Ostracism.